# THE EUGENICS REVIEW.

## Eugenics and Religion.

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Eleven years ago I contributed to the first number of the Eugenics Review an article on the moral aspects of Eugenics. It was followed by an article on Eugenics and the Church, from the pen of my friend and successor in the parish of All Saints, Ennismore Gardens, Archdeacon Peile. In that early stage of the Eugenics movement it was thought worth while to show that some clergymen at any rate were in sympathy with it, for there was reason to fear that religious prejudice might hamper the movement. There have been, in fact, very few manifestations of such prejudice, except on the part of the Roman Catholic Church—an important exception, certainly, but one which I fear we must accept as a permanent fact. I have not seen any attacks on the Society in the Anglican or Nonconformist press. And yet, in looking back on the eleven years in which the Society has been trying to arouse the public conscience, and to stimulate interest in race-improvement, I must confess to a feeling of disappointment. Very little interest is taken in the subject in religious circles, and the notion that it is part of our duty to our neighbour to think of the physical, intellectual and moral improvement of the human stock is still strange to the vast majority. I propose to consider the causes of this discouraging fact, of which I think we are all aware. We hoped that we were initiating a crusade against the real causes of half the ills which afflict mankind; we are still looked upon in many quarters as unpractical cranks, who wish to interfere with the right of every man and woman to choose his or her mate.

Religious ethics rest partly on authority and partly on the conscience or inner light. In the Catholic Church authority is absolute; the individual conscience has its function, not in the discovery of truth, but in the discipline of the character in accordance with an authoritative standard. In proportion as a man's religion approximates to this type, he will be very slow to admit any new principles of ethics; and we shall find him either lukewarm or hostile towards such new demands of the enlightened conscience as care for the welfare of the lower animals, or any schemes of social amelioration except those which are based on charity in the traditional sense. Eugenics, of course, belongs to this category. It is part of secular morality; it has no supernatural sanction; and, therefore, to the Catholic mind, it belongs to the class of things indifferent; it does not appeal to the sense of religious duty.

Nevertheless, religious people as a rule are willing to accept

eugenic principles, provided that they are fortified by long tradition. The prejudice against the marriage of first cousins, whether well or ill founded, is accepted as readily by religious as irreligious persons; and if a similar tradition were established against the marriage of deaf mutes and epileptics, there would be no opposition on the part of the Churches. Whether any eugenic motives underlay the prohibition of cousinly marriages in the Roman Church, I do not know; if it was so, it would only be an instance of a law of which there are many other examples—namely, that a sanitary rule is put under supernatural sanction, and is observed long after its original motive has been forgotten.

"The great function and tendency of any religion, once established among a people," writes Professor McDougall, "is to preserve intact the current moral code and to secure conformity to it." This accounts for the extreme conservatism of religion. But the author adds that great religious leaders often succeed in breaking the bonds imposed by the more primitive religion, thus making moral progress possible. In Protestant countries the yoke of authority is light; and there would be no insuperable difficulties in incorporating our duty to posterity among the principles of social morality, if some religious teacher of commanding influence were to devote his energies to urging it.

But I do not think that the unbending conservatism of religion is the only or the chief cause why our propaganda has made so little way. If religion were our enemy, we should find an active enthusiasm for eugenics in those large sections of society which are not directly influenced by religious traditions. For example, we should find politicians taking some interest in race-improvement. But notoriously they take none whatever. We must, therefore, look deeper for the cause of an indifference which seems to us so regrettable and so culpable.

The enemy of eugenics is not religion but the anti-scientific temper. Men of science are justly proud of the wonderful progress which has been made in their lifetime, in physics, in astronomy, in electricity, in preventive medicine, and in several other branches of nature-study. They are slow to realise that the public mind is more alienated from their standpoint than it was a generation ago. If they took the trouble to read the most modern philosophy, they would see that a general revolt against the dictatorship of science has been the most remarkable tendency in modern thought. The Italian philosopher Aliotta has written an excellent book on "The Reaction against Science," in which he brings together the various schools, the Pragmatists, Activists, Voluntarists, and others, who from different sides have attacked the scientific view of the world. They have been helped and encouraged by dissensions within the scientific camp. Mechanical categories cannot be made to fit biology; biology and psychology cannot work harmoniously; and now claims are being made that Einstein's discoveries have undermined what seemed to be the firmest foundations of natural philosophy. There are too many persons who are glad to respond to the invitation to trample on the bugbear of determinism, as taught by the scientists of Queen Victoria's reign. They welcome the rifts in the orderly scheme of a scientific universe

with a sense of emancipation. Already there has been a great recrudescence of superstition: people are no longer ashamed of believing anything that they want to believe.

In politics, the anti-scientific temper is rampant. The Revolution, which more than a hundred years ago guillotined Lavoisier, 'having no need of chemists,' is now proclaiming that it has no need of 'intellectuals' of any kind. In Russia they have been tortured and massacred; in our own country they are ignored and despised. That intellect as such should be spoken of with contempt is a new thing; it indicates he barbarisation of public and social life. The vogue of irrationalists and emotionalists like Benjamin Kidd and Gilbert Chesterton shows what the reading public likes. Political economy has changed its character. It used to be an abstract science, the science of wealth. Mistakes were doubtless made, mistakes which the old economists would have admitted when confronted with adequate evidence; but we are now told that because the 'economic man' is an abstraction (he did not pretend to be anything else), there can be no science of wealth which does not take into account a miscellaneous complex of alien considerations, which deprive it of any scientific character. The whole nation, and especially the Government, is behaving as if it had come into a huge fortune by the war. We vote and spend money in utter recklessness, and the few articulate protests are not attended to. It is a good illustration of what 'Government by Public Opinion' (Lord Morley's definition of democracy) means in practice. The trained mind finds it difficult to realise how utterly confused are the springs of action in the majority—how self-interest and prejudice and mob-contagion and sentiment and the wish to believe are combined in an irrational jumble, out of which emerges a something which psychologists dignify by the name of the 'Group Mind,' but which is really an undisciplined and unsifted bundle of emotions and prejudices, gathering by preference round a sentiment rather than an idea. Such is the mentality of the average man, who, strong in his numbers, spurns all authority and treats the warnings of science with contempt.

Now we eugenists believe that unless civilisation is guided on scientific principles, it must come to disaster. We do not believe that there is any natural or supernatural power which will intervene to save us from the consequences of transgressing the laws of nature. It is even part of our religion to believe this. We cannot follow Huxley in his surprising exhortation to 'resist the cosmic process.' Such a Manichean view of the relation of nature to spirit is impossible for us. The cosmic process is the fundamental law of the universe. We are under this law, and our duty is to understand and obey it. It will make us or break us with impartial indifference, according as we believe as loyal subjects or as rebels. There is nothing in the Christian religion to foster irrational emotionalism. Our theology preserves certain relics of obsolete science, no doubt. It is the nature of religion to preserve its traditions; and a false opinion is therefore likely to remain longest as a dogma; it has become imprisoned in theology, like a fly in amber. But Christianity in itself has no quarrel with science; it is neither irrational nor Manichean.

It is for this scientific faith that we stand. We have no fixed dogmas. We should be ready to give up all our theories, and even to dissolve our Society, if science proved that we were on the wrong lines. And we can understand, though we profoundly disagree with, those who oppose us on grounds of authority. Just as the political economist has no radical quarrel with the man who says, 'Humanity and the fear of revolution make it impossible for us to adopt the social system which produces the aggregate maximum of wealth,' but has a great quarrel with the man who says, 'Double wages and halve output, and our trade will not suffer at all;' so we know where we are with a man who says, 'Birth-control is forbidden by God; we prefer poverty, unemployment, war, the physical, intellectual and moral degeneration of the people, and a high death-rate to any interference with the universal command to be fruitful and multiply;' but we have no patience with those who say that we can have unrestricted and unregulated propagation without those consequences. It is a great part of our work to press home to the public mind the alternative that lies before us. Either rational selection must take the place of the natural selection which the modern State will not allow to act, or we must go on deteriorating. When we can convince the public of this, the opposition of organised religion will soon collapse or become ineffective.

Professor Karl Pearson, whose support we in this Society have long desired and have not yet obtained, was lecturing ten years ago as President of the Social and Political Education League. He describes how a few years before he was lecturing in a great provincial town on Nature and Nurture. He suggested that elaborate schemes of primary, secondary, and higher education could only be profitable if good material existed to which they could be applied. This, he says, 'which seemed to me an obvious truth, raised a little storm. A great municipal authority expressed regret that I had come to tell them that all they had done for technical education, all the vast sums they had spent in founding their university, were idle. He for his part would not for a moment accept such teaching. In that great centre of political and municipal activity the one thing that was worth considering was nurture.' The Professor says that there would be no reason to criticise this attitude if it had been preceded by the recognition that it was and must be a *tentative* policy, a policy which was on its trial until we had demonstrated that nurture plays the dominant part in human progress. What we have to object to is the untested assumption that nurture does play the dominant part in human progress.

Professor Pearson proceeds to demolish this assumption. He reminds us that in spite of a whole generation of costly technical instruction, we have lately produced no inventors whose names will stand out in the future like those of Arkwright, Watt and the Stephensons. And not only in technical sciences, but in every other walk of life, there is the same lamentable dearth of first-class ability. In the much-abused Victorian Age there were at least a dozen men who were recognised as great by their contemporaries, and who will be recognised as great by posterity, in spite of Lytton Strachey and his like. In our generation there are in England no great men of any description—no great poets, artists, statesmen, generals, scientists, philosophers, or

prophets. And yet, as Professor Pearson says, there is no nation which since 1840 has so continuously and successfully worked at improving environment as our own country. Does not this indicate that in confining our attention to nurture, and entirely neglecting nature, we have been making a great mistake?

An exhaustive investigation of family histories leads the Professor to the conclusion to which we have all been led by our comparatively superficial observations—the conclusion that our policy of actively encouraging nature's failures and misfits to increase and multiply, while the better stocks are taxed and penalised for their support, is producing the results which might have been predicted. He gives as a specimen a case of congenital cataract. A blind woman had two daughters, who both became blind at forty. Of her five grandchildren, four were blind by thirty. Of her fifteen great-grandchildren, thirteen had cataract. Of the forty-six great-great-grandchildren, twenty had diseased eyes at the age of seven, and several became blind of one or both eyes. 'Nature, left to herself, would have cut off this family at its very inception.' Such pedigrees are familiar to all of us, and we may fairly ask whether any nation which permits such an exercise of the supposed right of procreation can be called highly civilised. But Professor Pearson has also tabulated a long list of natural characters, and another long list of nurtural characters, and has worked out in each case what is called the co-efficient of correlation, that is to say, the percentage of resemblance between members of the same family in natural and in nurtural qualities. The result is that in natural characters, whether physical or pathological, the mean parental co-relation is .49, and the mean fraternal correlation slightly greater, while the mean nurture value, computed in the same manner is .03, practically *nil*. The kind of correspondences which he sought and did not find may be judged from a few instances—eye-disease and over-crowding; state of nutrition and mental capacity; alcoholism and weight of child; wages of father and weight of child. His conclusion is that the influence of environment is not 1-5th that of heredity, and quite possibly not 1-10th of it. It is the man who makes his environment, not the environment which makes the man. That race will progress fastest where success in life, power to reproduce its kind, lies with native worth. The fall in our birth rate, the Professor goes on, has been a *differential* fall. The fitter of all classes have fewer and fewer children, but the unfit maintain their own numbers; nor is the reason hard to seek; the better endowed have a family standard to maintain amid increasing difficulties; the residuum is unambitious, reckless, and unrestrained. Our ignorance of the relative intensity of nature and nurture has led us to disregard nature in the belief that improved nurture must involve racial progress.

The Professor's lecture ends with an earnest appeal, not to adopt the lecturer's conclusions without examination, but to realise the magnitude of the problem, on the ground that otherwise we 'can give no aid to the working man on the points where he needs most education at the present critical time in our national history.' 'Our working classes,' he says, 'need more than ever educational help, they need more than ever some other guidance than that of the politician and journ-

alist; neither of these will lead them to see beyond the horizon of class interest, will enable them to look upon the nation as an ever-changing organisation susceptible of advance or decay, as it obeys or disobeys stern natural laws.' As Seeley says, 'think that you are the apostles, not of any political opinions, but of a method.'

I have quoted and summarised Professor Pearson at some length; because he is himself a socialist, with rather extreme views on some subjects; and I do not know any stronger instance of the contrast between the scientific and the anti-scientific view of social politics than to set his lecture by the side of the utterances of the sentimental and vote-catching socialists whom our politicians are so much afraid to offend. Professor Pearson is not a professing Christian, but he believes in the inviolability of nature's laws, and in the sacredness of truth. The anti-scientific mind believes in neither; it believes in emotionalism, and in being 'in the swim.' It is this type of mind that is our enemy.

The eugenist will probably say that religion is the strongest and perhaps the most beneficient of all *nurtural* influences. It is this; but like eugenics itself, which is a nurtural influence, it makes nature and not nurture its end. This is certainly true of Christianity. Christianity aims at saving the soul—the personality, the nature, of man, not his body or his environment. According to Christianity, a man is saved, not by what he has, or knows, or does, but by what he is. It treats all the apparatus of life with a disdain as great as that of the biologist; so long as a man is inwardly healthy, it cares very little whether he is rich or poor, learned or simple, and even whether he is happy or unhappy. It attaches no importance to quantitative measurements of any kind. The Christian does not gloat over favourable trade-statistics, nor congratulate himself on the disparity between the number of births and deaths. For him, as for the eugenist, the test of the welfare of a country is the quality of the human beings whom it produces. Quality is everything, quantity is nothing. And besides this, the Christian conception of a kingdom of God upon earth teaches us to turn our eyes to the future, and to think of the welfare of posterity as a thing which concerns us as much as that of our own generation. This welfare, as conceived by Christianity, is of course something different from external prosperity; it is to be the victory of intrinsic worth and healthiness over all the false ideals and the deep-seated diseases which at present spoil civilisation.

It seems to me that this ideal is practically identical with that of the eugenist. Some time ago a bishop declared that eugenics put brawn before brain. Of course we do nothing of the kind. I do not know that we want our descendants to be very brawny. It depends on whether they will have any use for strong muscles. I hope they will, for the athlete is a beautiful creature; but we should all admit that brain is more important than brawn, and a fine character than either. Nor do we, I think, forget that nurture is necessary as well as nature. There are several reasons besides the claims of humanity, which make the eugenist favourable to schemes for abolishing the slums where the submerged tenth congregate. They are the chief breeding-ground of undesirable citizens; and since their inhabitants cannot be got rid of,

it is better that attempts should be made to raise them to a position of self-respect, in which they will probably not breed so fast. It is only in the lowest strata that the worst specimens, the imbecile, for instance, get married, except occasionally by fraud; in the higher ranks a thoroughly degenerate stock tends to die out, unless there is great beauty or wealth or a title to act as a makeweight. It is also certain that some part of the inferiority of the slum-population is due to environment, not to heredity; and this ought not so to be. We should be sorry to add the educational enthusiasts to our critics by seeming to disparage their activities. Education is necessary, and religion is necessary. Only we do wish to remind our orthodox and conservative friends that the Sermon on the Mount contains some admirably clear and unmistakable eugenic precepts. 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, neither can a good tree bring forth evil fruit. Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.' We wish to apply these words not only to the actions of individuals, which spring from their characters, but to the character of individuals, which spring from their inherited qualities. This extension of the scope of the maxim seems to me quite legitimate. Men do not gather grapes of thorns. As our proverb says, you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. If we believe this, and do not act upon it by trying to move public opinion towards giving social reform, education, and religion a better material to work upon, we are sinning against the light, and not doing our best to bring in the Kingdom of God upon earth.

I may be reminded that organised religion, so far as it concerns itself with economic questions, on the whole supports the most anti-eugenic schemes, and ranges itself on the side of the sentimentalists against science. This, I may be told, is the effect of Christianity in practice; and we must suppose that what expresses itself in practice is the inner logic of the system, though some Christians may argue on the other side. The opposition of religion and science is, therefore, a real conflict of irreconcilable principles. I do not take this view myself. Organised religion, when it mixes in politics, is always on the same side, the winning side; it is nothing more than a creaking weathercock. It is not political religion with which I am concerned in this lecture, but the convictions of really religious persons; and I do not think that we need despair of converting them to our views.

I fully admit that the prospect for the immediate future is as black as it could be; but there is a wise old proverb, that 'things refuse to be mismanaged for a long time.' At present it is true that we are breeding from our worst stocks, and that our best are being squeezed out of existence. The usual opinion is that this is the result of our awakened conscience, our increased pity for the unfortunate and our determination to make an end of privilege. I do not wish to be cynical, but I think the ethical side of the revolution—for it is nothing less—has been much exaggerated. We shall always have a class of gentlemen in black coats to find edifying justifications for whatever the party in power chooses to do; but these advocates do not in the least degree determine the national policy. As Frederick the Great said: '*Je prends d'abor*

*je trouverai toujours des pédants pour prouver mes droits.*' The key to the whole situation, in my opinion, is the historical law that whenever one class imposes the taxes and another class pays them, the result is reckless extravagance and foolish waste, leading to national bankruptcy and general ruin. Consider only the main events in modern history. In France, during the 18th century, the kings imposed the taxes, and the unrepresented populace paid them. The kings kept up an insanely wasteful court, and attempted to enlarge their estates, as they put the matter to themselves, by dynastic wars of aggression. The result was national bankruptcy, and the general overturn which we call the Revolution. During the 19th century, especially in this country, the middle class was in power. They had the money; they imposed the taxes and paid them themselves, taking care that there was no waste. The result was an unparalleled progress in all the things that can be measured by statistics. The accumulated wealth of the country became prodigious. Before the end of the century this state of things had already come to an end; the power was falling into the hands of the untaxed class. Uneconomic and incidentally anti-eugenic legislation was proposed and adopted. But at first these measures met with general approval, because the wealth of the country was so enormous, and so unevenly divided, that we felt that we could well afford the luxury of making the unfortunate more comfortable. Until 1914, the country was still very prosperous, and the rich still seemed to have more than enough—more than they deserved and more than was good for them. Then came the Great War. Modern wars are not desired by any nation; they are mainly the result of mutual fear. We have all seen two dogs meet each other on a road. They are both frightened; they approach each other watching each other's eyes, feebly wagging their tails in deprecation. When they meet, they sidle half past each other, the head of each near the still-wagging tail of the other. There they stand, afraid to move, till one of them twitches a leg, the other gives a start, and in a moment they are at each other's throats. That is how the insane business began which has engulfed the accumulations of a century of thrift and industry, accumulations which might have been drawn upon without much injustice to finance schemes for the public welfare. War itself is terribly anti-eugenic—'immer der Krieg verschlingt die Besten'—but this is not the point which I wish to make just now. The war brought to an end the possibility of continuing uneconomic humanitarian legislation without damaging the national prosperity. The limit of taxation has already been reached merely in paying the interest on the war debt; but beyond this, the direct plunder of capital has begun. Nineteenth century England was a going concern; post-war England is a gone concern. We have to face the certainty of annually increasing deficits, which cannot be met by printing more banknotes. The goose that laid the golden eggs is having its throat cut at this moment. There must before long be a thinly disguised repudiation of the scraps of paper on which the nation's debts of honour are inscribed. This will mean, of course, the disappearance of the tax-paying class. Thenceforward the masses, who are in power, will have to tax themselves. Those who call the tune will have to pay the piper. The

country will be very poor, and to a large extent barbarised; but sentimentalism, the great enemy of science and eugenics, will be at a discount. Wastefulness will come to an end, because there will be nothing left to waste. I see a possibility for eugenics in the otherwise dismal prospect which lies before us. Many years ago a distinguished man of science—I think it was Professor Karl Pearson, whom I have quoted so much already—defended free education and other socialistic measures on the ground that ultimately they would force the electors to adopt state-control of population. Under an individualistic régime, he said, we shall never induce the voters to do anything of the kind; but when the working man has to pay for the education of his neighbour's children, to support feebleminded schools, hospitals for incurables, reformatories for the morally degenerate, and prisons for the hereditary criminal, he is likely to realise that his neighbours have no right to impose these burdens upon him, and that it is his interest to apply the sacred trade-union principle of limitation of output to his neighbours' procreative activities, especially if the output is of a thoroughly bad quality. In this way, the war may have abridged by fifty years a period which was by no means unpleasant to live in, but which from the point of view of the eugenist was a period of decadence. I do not see a crumb of comfort for my own class, and I am afraid that many of our best families will inevitably disappear from the face of the earth; but I wish to emphasise that the phase of civilisation which has vanished in blood and smoke was a time of reversed selection and of the survival of the unfittest. By a beneficent dispensation of Providence, the sentimentalists, in precipitating national bankruptcy, are also hastening the end of their own mischievous activities.

It is clearly the duty of the well-born, in the Galtonian sense, not to cut off their own families, however dreary the outlook for their children may be. The temptation to do so will be severe; and I have no doubt that in the professional classes especially we shall have thousands of childless and servantless households, in which the tradition of culture and refined living will be maintained at the heavy price of family suicide. I cannot blame those who think that this sacrifice has been forced upon them; but as a eugenist I plead for the preservation of those stocks to which the country has owed the greater part of its glory. It is just here that eugenics may find in religion a potent ally. For in proportion as we can raise our minds above material comfort, in proportion as we can find our happiness in intellectual and spiritual interests, in the contemplation of all things that are lovely and pure and noble and of good report, in proportion as we can set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth, poverty, unless it be very extreme, may be lightly borne; and as we shall find our own lives tolerable, we shall not wish to inhibit the natural and almost universal desire to leave children behind us to carry on our name and perhaps to prolong the life of the family into happier days. Families must of course be small; but I hope that the childless household will be an exception. The scientific mind ought to be able to take long views, and to realise that pessimism is as little justified as optimism. The tendencies which the scientific mind has most reason to deplore are busy digging their own graves. We are on the side of Dame Nature, and Dame Nature has a short and sharp way of punishing her rebels.